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5 METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR IMPROVED THERMAL MANAGEMENT OF A
 VOLTAGE SOURCE INVERTER OPERATING AT LOW OUTPUT
 FREQUENCY UTILIZING A ZERO VECTOR MODULATION TECHNIQUE

10 FIELD OF THE INVENTION

 The technical field of this disclosure is voltage source inverters, and more particularly, thermal management of power switches within voltage source inverters.

15 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

 Voltage source inverters are increasingly utilized in many applications, such as, for example, motor drive systems for electric vehicles or hybrid-electric vehicles within automotive applications. In these applications, a voltage source inverter (VSI) may supply an alternating current (AC) dependant device, such as,
20 for example, an AC motor.

 Thermal management issues concerning power switches within the voltage source inverter (VSI) may arise when the VSI operates at low or zero output frequency, that is, the VSI is applying zero or low voltage across the phases while receiving a constant direct current (DC) link voltage, referred to as
25 input voltage. When operating at low or zero output frequency, the average voltage produced by the VSI is low in comparison to the DC link voltage, while the output current might be the switch rated current.

 Thermal management issues arise at zero or low output frequency due to slowly changing AC current. That is, under these conditions, a power switch in
30 the VSI might be required to carry maximum rated current continuously or for a very long period, causing constant high power dissipation inside the power switch. This condition represents a worst-case operating condition for a switch in the VSI. A conventional solution is to time-limit the VSI operation at zero output frequency and full output current. Unfortunately, this conventional solution is

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problematic for electric and hybrid vehicle operation because it limits the time during which maximum torque can be applied to the electric motor during vehicle start.

- 5 It would be desirable, therefore, to provide a system that would overcome these and other disadvantages.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- 10 One aspect of the invention provides a method of thermal management within a voltage source inverter by sensing a low output frequency condition, determining a zero vector modulation responsive to the sensed low output frequency condition, and applying the determined zero vector modulation to reduce thermal stress in the voltage source inverter.

- 15 In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a computer readable medium storing a computer program includes: computer readable code for determining a zero vector modulation responsive to a low output frequency condition; and computer readable code for applying the determined zero vector modulation to reduce thermal stress in the voltage source inverter.

- 20 In accordance with yet another aspect of the invention, a system for thermal management in a voltage source inverter is provided. The system includes means for sensing a low output frequency condition. The system additionally includes means for determining a zero vector modulation responsive to the sensed low output frequency condition. Means for applying the determined zero vector modulation to reduce thermal stress in the voltage source
25 inverter is also provided.

- The foregoing and other features and advantages of the invention will become further apparent from the following detailed description of the presently preferred embodiment, read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings. The scope of the invention is defined by the appended claims and equivalents
30 thereof, the detailed description and drawings being merely illustrative of the invention rather than limiting the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating a conventional motor drive system;

5 **FIG. 2** is a block diagram illustrating a voltage source inverter control circuit according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a hexagonal space vector structure diagram illustrating potential combinations of inverter switch states of a system controller, illustrated in **FIG. 2**, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

10 **FIG. 4** is a space vector area diagram illustrating a portion of the hexagonal space vector structure diagram, illustrated in **FIG. 3**, and including a mapped reference vector according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 5 is a flow diagram illustrating a method for providing improved
15 thermal management in a voltage source inverter utilizing zero vector modulation according to another embodiment of the present invention.

Throughout the specification, and in the claims, the term “connected” means a direct connection between components or devices that are connected without any intermediate devices. The term “coupled” means either a direct
20 connection between components or devices that are connected, or an indirect connection through one or more passive or active intermediary devices.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating a conventional motor drive system **100** including a voltage source inverter **110** and an AC motor **120**. Voltage source inverter **110** is a conventional voltage source inverter and includes power supply V_{batt} , diodes ($D_{11} - D_{23}$), and switches ($111 - 123$). Nodes ($N_{11} - N_{15}$) are additionally included for illustrative purposes.

Power supply V_{batt} includes a positive terminal (+) and a negative terminal (-). The positive terminal (+) is coupled to node N_{11} and the negative terminal (-) is coupled to node N_{12} . Diode D_{11} includes a cathode coupled to node N_{11} and an anode coupled to node N_{13} , diode D_{12} includes a cathode coupled to node N_{11} and an anode coupled to node N_{14} , and diode D_{13} includes a cathode coupled to node N_{11} and an anode coupled to node N_{15} . Diode D_{21} includes a cathode coupled to node N_{13} and an anode coupled to node N_{12} , diode D_{22} includes a cathode coupled to node N_{14} and an anode coupled to node N_{12} , and diode D_{23} includes a cathode coupled to node N_{15} and an anode coupled to node N_{12} .

Each diode ($D_{11} - D_{23}$) has an associated switch ($111 - 123$) located in parallel to the associated diode. The combination of a diode and an associated switch is called a power switch. The power switch, formed in this way, can carry current in two directions and can block the voltage in one direction. Two power switches are grouped together to form an inverter branch. In an example and referring to **FIG. 1**, three branches are formed within voltage source inverter **110**.

The switches ($111 - 123$) provide a means of controlling current flow within a portion of each branch of voltage source inverter **110**. Switches ($111 - 113$) are called upper switches. Switches ($121 - 123$) are called lower switches. In one embodiment and detailed in **FIG. 2** below, switches ($111 - 123$) are software controlled utilizing a high frequency pulse width modulated methodology.

AC motor **120** includes three terminals ($I_1 - I_3$). Terminal I_1 is coupled to node N_{13} , terminal I_2 is coupled to node N_{14} , and terminal I_3 is coupled to node N_{15} . AC motor **120** receives an AC voltage input from voltage source inverter **110** and produces a mechanical output based on the AC input.

In operation, voltage source inverter **110** includes six current bi-directional, voltage unidirectional power switches with one switch within each branch open while the other switch within the branch is closed. Closing the switch allows current to flow within a portion of the branch. In an example and referring to **FIG. 1**, closing switch **111** allows current to flow from power supply V_{batt} to Terminal I_1 via node N_{13} . Alternatively, closing the switch could allow current to flow in the opposite direction from Terminal I_1 to supply V_{batt} , via node N_{13} , depending upon motor operating conditions.

A high frequency pulse width modulation (PWM) technique is utilized to control the per-cycle average, output voltage magnitude and frequency. The power switches operate at a constant switching frequency, f_{sw} , while the switch duty cycles are modulated to produce three-phase voltages of desired magnitude and frequency.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram illustrating a voltage source inverter control circuit **200** according to an embodiment of the present invention. Voltage source inverter control circuit **200** includes system controller **210**, switch controllers (**211 - 223**), and a data input **220**. In one embodiment, each switch controller controls an associated switch within a voltage source inverter.

System controller **210** is a control device designed to monitor and receive data from various sources, such as, for example data input **220**, process the received data and transmit control signals to switch controllers (**211 - 223**) based on the received processed data. In one embodiment, system controller **210** includes hardware and software necessary to receive a pulse width modulated signal, including instructions for operation of power switches, and producing individual power switch control signals based on the received pulse width modulated signal, as known in the art.

In an example and referring to **FIGS. 1 and 2**, system controller **210** is implemented as a processing unit and includes accompanying devices, such as PROMs, and software programming enabling the processing unit to conduct operations. Additionally, system controller **210** includes a database having a space vector structure, such as in **Table 1** below, defining a switching space vector associated with switches within each branch for any given switching combination. In this example, the database is implemented as a lookup table, as known in the art.

Switch controllers (**211 – 223**) are control devices designed to receive control signals from system controller **210** and implement the control signals within an associated power switch. In one embodiment, switch controllers (**211 – 223**) include hardware and software necessary to implement power switch control signals received from system controller **210**. In an example and referring to **FIG.1**, each switch controller (**211 – 223**) controls an associated power switch combination. In this example, switch controller **211** provides a power switch control signal to the power switch combination. Similarly, the remaining switch controllers each provide a power switch control signal to the associated power switch combination.

Vector	STATE	Branch 1	Branch 2	Branch 3
V_0	Zero	0	0	0
V_1	Active	1	0	0
V_2	Active	1	1	0
V_3	Active	0	1	0
V_4	Active	0	1	1
V_5	Active	0	0	1
V_6	Active	1	0	1
V_7	Zero	1	1	1

Table 1

Table 1 is a table associated with a voltage source inverter, such as, for example voltage source inverter **110** and system controller **210** in **FIG. 1** above. **Table 1** includes switching space vectors ($V_0 - V_7$) associated with power switches within each branch (Branch 1 – Branch 3) for any given switching combination. In **Table 1**, each branch represents two current bi-directional, voltage unidirectional power switches with one switch within the branch open while the other switch within the branch is closed. The switching space vectors ($V_0 - V_7$) are created when the three phase-to-neutral voltages sum-up to zero by allowing association of each switching space vectors ($V_0 - V_7$) with a specific inverter switch state.

In one embodiment, a voltage source inverter having three branches, each branch including two power switches, results in eight possible switching space vector ($V_0 - V_7$) combinations. In an example and referring to **FIGS. 1** and **2** and **Table 1**, a “0” represents the upper switch of the indicated branch as the open switch while the lower switch within the branch is closed. A “1” represents the lower switch of the indicated branch as the open switch while the upper switch within the branch is closed. In this example, switching space vector V_1 indicates that Branch 1 (switches **111** and **121**) is configured with switch **111** closed and switch **121** open, Branch 2 (switches **112** and **122**) is configured with switch **122** closed and switch **112** open, and Branch 3 (switches **113** and **123**) is configured with switch **123** closed and switch **113** open.

Table 1 additionally includes a status column for each state. The status column indicates either a “Zero” or an “Active” status. An active status indicates that a switching configuration resulting in a net voltage being applied to the load, such as, for example the AC motor **120** of **FIG. 1** above. A zero status indicates a switching configuration resulting in the load being effectively shorted.

FIG. 3 is a hexagonal space vector structure diagram **300** illustrating potential combinations of inverter switch states of the system controller **200**, illustrated in **FIG. 2** and included within **Table 1**, according to an embodiment of the present invention. In **FIG. 3**, the active states from **Table 1** are utilized to form the vertices of the hexagonal space vector structure diagram and the zero states are located within the center of the hexagon. Area lying between the different active states, called a space vector area, and within the hexagon boundaries is labeled, such as, for example "s=1" based on one of the switching space vectors ($V_0 - V_7$) that defines the area.

In use, any voltage requirement falling within the hexagon boundaries of the hexagonal space vector structure diagram **300**, can be produced, on a per-cycle basis, by a combination of the switching space vectors. Producing the voltage requirement is accomplished by adjusting a combination of active states and zero states duty cycles, within a period, and is detailed in **FIG. 4** below. In an example and referring to **FIG. 3**, a voltage requirement falling within space vector area "s=1" can be produced by adjusting a combination of active states (V_1 and V_2) and zero states (V_0 and V_7) duty cycles, within a given period T_s , to achieve the required voltage.

FIG. 4 is a space vector area diagram **400** illustrating a portion of the hexagonal space vector structure diagram **300**, illustrated in **FIG. 3** above, and including a reference vector V^* , according to an embodiment of the present invention. The reference vector V^* represents a mapped power requirement. In one embodiment and referring to **FIGS. 3** and **4**, mapping the reference vector V^* to the space vector area diagram **400** allows determination of the space vector area, such as, for example the space vector area s=1 of **FIG. 3**.

In this embodiment, determination of the space vector area allows determination of duty cycles ($t_1 - t_6$) associated with active state switching space vectors ($V_1 - V_6$) that define the space vector area within a given switching period T_s . Once duty cycles ($t_1 - t_6$) for active state switching space vectors ($V_1 - V_6$) that define the space vector area are determined, duty cycles (t_0 and t_7) for zero state switching space vectors (V_0 and V_7) can be determined.

In an example and referring to **FIG. 4**, the total duty cycle ($t_0 + t_7$) of zero state switching space vectors (V_0 and V_7) is equal to the duration of the period T_s less the duty cycles (t_1 and t_2) for the switching space vectors (V_1 and V_2) and is expressed in Equation 1 as:

$$d = (t_0 + t_7)/T_s = 1 - [(t_1 + t_2)/T_s] \quad (1)$$

In this example, either zero state switching space vectors (V_0 or V_7), or a combination of both zero state switching space vectors (V_0 and V_7) can be used during the switching period T_s to achieve the completion of the switching period T_s without affecting the average value of the output voltage delivered to the load. In one embodiment, utilization of either zero state switching space vectors (V_0 or V_7) or utilization the combination of zero state switching space vectors (V_0 and V_7) allows optimization of pulse width modulation (PWM) sequencing, such as, for example to achieve minimal switching losses, minimal voltage distortion, minimal current distortion, and the like.

In the present invention, utilization of the zero state switching space vectors (V_0 or V_7) allows distribution of conduction losses among VSI power switches in the branch carrying the largest current.

At low output frequencies the reference vector \vec{V}^* includes a small magnitude. In this embodiment, the zero vector duty cycle d for reference vector \vec{V}^* can be expressed in Equation 2 as:

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$$d = (t_0 + t_7)/T_s \gg 1 - [(t_1 + t_2)/T_s] \quad (2)$$

When PWM is utilized so that the highest phase current is not switched,
10 power dissipation for the power switch carrying the largest amount of current I_{\max} ,
is equal to the maximum conduction power losses $P_{\text{cond}}(I_{\max})$. The power
dissipation can be reduced when conduction loss of the switch carrying the peak
current for the duration of the zero vector duty cycle d is greater than the amount
of energy needed to turn the switch on and off (E_{sw}) at the peak current and the
15 switching frequency f_{sw} . In an example and referring to **FIG. 4**, zero vector duty
cycle d is the duty cycle d_0 for zero state switching space vector V_0 . In this
example, the expression can be expressed in Equation 3 as:

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$$[P_{\text{cond}}(I_{\max}) \cdot d_0] > [E_{\text{sw}} \cdot f_{\text{sw}}] \quad (3)$$

Utilization of either zero state switching space vectors (V_0 or V_7) or
utilization the combination of zero state switching space vectors (V_0 and V_7) is
called zero vector modulation (ZVM). The zero state switching space vectors (V_0
or V_7) are selected periodically at a zero vector modulation frequency f_{zvm} and
25 zero vector modulation duty cycle d_{zvm} , in order to reduce power dissipation in
the switch carrying the largest current. A zero vector modulation frequency f_{zvm}
of 100 Hz utilization a zero vector modulation duty cycle d_{zvm} of .5 are examples
of zero vector modulation (ZVM) implementation.

When zero vector modulation (ZVM) is utilized, average power dissipation for a ZVM period, T_{zvm} , for the power switch most stressed can be expressed in Equation 4 as:

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$$P_{cond}(I_{max}) - d_{zvm}[P_{cond}(I_{max}) \cdot d_0 - E_{sw} \cdot f_{sw}] \quad (4)$$

where ZVM duty cycle d_{zvm} is the complementary zero state duty cycle d_7 for zero state switching space vector V_7 , i.e the power dissipation for the switch carrying the largest current is reduced. However, the total losses for the VSI branch carrying the largest current are increased and can be expressed in Equation 5 as:

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$$2 \cdot (d_{zvm})(E_{sw}) \cdot (f_{sw}) \quad (5)$$

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Based on the above equation, utilizing a smaller complementary ZVM duty cycle d_{zvm} will result in a reduction of power dissipation of the most stressed power switch while producing a small increase of total inverter losses. In an example and referring to **FIG. 4**, a ZVM frequency f_{zvm} of 10 hertz (Hz) utilized with a duty cycle d_0 for zero state switching space vector V_0 of .7, and utilizing a ZVM duty cycle d_{zvm} of .65 for zero state switching space vector V_7 results in negligible switching losses within a MOSFET inverter. In this example, zero vector modulation (ZVM) reduces power dissipation within the power switch carrying the largest amount of current thereby allowing the control of junction temperatures.

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FIG. 5 is a flow diagram illustrating a method for providing improved thermal management in a voltage source inverter utilizing zero vector modulation according to another embodiment of the present invention. **FIG. 5** details an embodiment of a method **500** for controlling thermal build-up within power switches in a voltage source inverter (VSI). Method **500** may utilize one or more concepts detailed in **FIGS. 1 – 4**, above.

Method **500** begins at block **510**. First, a low output frequency condition is sensed (Block **520**). In one embodiment, low frequency conditions occur when an electric motor is rotating at a very low speed or when the motor is at stand-still. In an example, the very low speed or stand-still conditions occur during vehicle start-up, such as, in an electric vehicle or during engine cranking in a hybrid vehicle starter-generator application.

Next, a zero vector modulation responsive to the sensed low output frequency condition is determined (Block **530**). In one embodiment, a power requirement, called a reference vector, associated with the sensed low output frequency condition is mapped to a space vector area within a space vector structure diagram. In an example and referring to **FIGS. 3 and 4**, a voltage requirement falling within space vector area “s=1” can be produced by adjusting a combination of active state switching space vector’s (V_1 and V_2) and zero state switching space vector’s (V_0 and V_7) duty cycles, within a given period T_s , to achieve the required voltage. In this example and referring to **Table 1**, each active and zero state switching space vector includes three associated branch configurations defined within the table and detailed above.

Then, the determined zero vector modulation is applied to reduce thermal stress within the voltage source inverter (VSI) (Block **540**). In one embodiment, the space vector area including the reference vector is defined by two active state switching space vectors. A combination of the use of active state switching space vectors for a predetermined time (active state duty cycle) within an operating period produces the reference vector. The remaining time (operating

period less the active state duty cycle) is allocated for the use of a combination of zero state switching space vectors.

5 In an example and referring to **FIG. 4**, the duty cycles (t_1 and t_2) for the switching space vectors (V_1 and V_2) are determined based on the reference vector V^* . The total duty cycle ($t_0 + t_7$) of zero state switching space vectors (V_0 and V_7) is equal to the duration of the period T_s less the duty cycles (t_1 and t_2) for the switching space vectors (V_1 and V_2). In this example, either zero state switching space vectors (V_0 or V_7), or a combination of both zero state switching space vectors (V_0 and V_7) can be used during the switching period T_s to achieve the completion of the switching period T_s without affecting the average value of the output voltage delivered to the load. Power is then delivered to the load based on the duty cycles of the active and zero state switching space vectors that are associated with specific branch configurations in **Table 1**, above. The method ends at block **550**.

The above-described system and method for improved thermal management in a voltage source inverter is an example system and method. The system and method for improved thermal management in a voltage source inverter illustrate one possible approach for improving thermal management in a voltage source inverter. The actual implementation may vary from the package discussed. Moreover, various other improvements and modifications to this invention may occur to those skilled in the art, and those improvements and modifications will fall within the scope of this invention as set forth in the claims below.

25 The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from its essential characteristics. The described embodiments are to be considered in all respects only as illustrative and not restrictive.